

Migration

Refer back to Figure 2-3 (ecumene) for a moment. Humans have spread across Earth during the past 7,000 years. This diffusion of human settlement from a small portion of Earth's land area to most of it resulted from migration. To accomplish the spread across Earth, humans have permanently changed their place of residence—where they sleep, store their possessions, and receive legal documents. Geographers document *from where* people migrate and *to where* they migrate. They also study reasons *why* people migrate.

How many times has your family moved? In the United States, the average family moves once every 6 years. Was your last move traumatic or exciting? The loss of old friends and familiar settings can hurt, but the experiences awaiting you at a new location can be stimulating. Think about the multitude of Americans—maybe including yourself—who have migrated from other countries. Imagine the feelings of people migrating from another country when they arrive in a new land without a job, friends, or—for many—the ability to speak the local language.

Why would people make a perilous journey across thousands of kilometers of ocean? Why did the pioneers cross the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, or the Mojave Desert to reach the American West? Why do people continue to migrate by the millions today? The hazards that many migrants have faced are a measure of the strong lure of new locations and the desperate conditions in their former homelands. Most people migrate in search of three objectives: economic opportunity, cultural freedom, and environmental comfort. In this chapter, the reasons why people migrate will be studied.

KEY ISSUES

1. Why do people migrate?
2. Where are migrants distributed?
3. Why do migrants face obstacles?
4. Why do people migrate within a country?

CASE STUDY

Migrating from Ukraine to Italy

Lesya Kolosova lived with her husband and two teenage daughters in a two-room apartment in Kovel, a city of 63,000 inhabitants in Ukraine. At age 50, she decided to migrate to Milan, Italy, 1,000 miles away, leaving behind her family in Kovel.

Kolosova migrated to Italy to take a high-paying job. She had a college degree in economics and had a good office job in Kovel. But it paid only \$120 a month, an average wage in Ukraine. In Italy, she took a job that paid \$900 a month—cleaning households. Most of the money she earns is being sent back to her family in Ukraine.

Kolosova's migration to Italy was illegal, because she did not have a visa or work permit. To get to Italy, she paid a broker \$2,500 to sneak her across Ukraine's border with Poland, less than an hour from Kovel. Once in Poland, Kolosova could easily travel across Europe to Italy, because there are no border checks between countries belonging to the European Union.

Immigrants—both legal and illegal—have been pouring into Western Europe by the millions, primarily from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The United

States has similarly been the destination for millions of immigrants, primarily from Latin America and Asia. Like Kolosova, most immigrate in search of better job prospects than available at home.

Western Europeans, like Americans, are ambivalent toward immigration. On the one hand, immigrants perform jobs that local residents in wealthier countries don't want, especially in unskilled services and agriculture. On the other hand, Europeans and Americans want secure borders, and they fear the loss of language, religion, and other cultural traditions when immigrants arrive from other regions of the world.

Tensions between immigrants and local residents have escalated in Europe. In Spain, local youths have burned down the homes of immigrants. In France, immigrants have done the house burning. In the Netherlands, a prominent anti-immigration politician and a prominent anti-immigration filmmaker (the great grandnephew of Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh) were murdered, in a country where murders are extremely rare. Across Europe, politicians have attracted voters by spouting harsh—in some cases, racist—anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Diffusion was defined in Chapter 1 as a process by which a characteristic spreads from one area to another, and relocation diffusion was the spread of a characteristic through the bodily movement of people from one place to another. The subject of this chapter is a specific type of relocation diffusion called migration, which is a permanent move to a new location. Geographers document where people migrate to and from across the space of Earth.

The flow of migration always involves two-way connections. Given two locations, A and B, some people migrate from A to B, while at the same time others migrate from B to A. Emigration is migration from a location; immigration is migration to a location. The difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants is the net migration. If the number of immigrants exceeds the number of emigrants, the net migration is positive, and the region has net in-migration. If the number of emigrants exceeds the number of immigrants, the net migration is negative, and the region has net out-migration.

Migration is a form of mobility, which is a more general term covering all types of movements from one place to another. People display mobility in a variety of ways, such as by

journeying every weekday from their homes to places of work or education and once a week to shops, places of worship, or recreation areas. These types of short-term, repetitive, or cyclical movements that recur on a regular basis, such as daily, monthly, or annually, are called circulation. College students display another form of mobility—seasonal mobility—by moving to a dormitory each fall and returning home the following spring.

Geographers are especially interested in why people migrate, even though migration occurs much less frequently than other forms of mobility, because it produces profound changes for individuals and entire cultures. A permanent move to a new location disrupts traditional cultural ties and economic patterns in one region. At the same time, when people migrate, they take with them to their new home their language, religion, ethnicity, and other cultural traits, as well as their methods of farming and other economic practices.

The changing scale generated by modern transportation systems, especially motor vehicles and airplanes, makes relocation diffusion more feasible than in the past, when people had to rely on walking, animal power, or slow ships. However, thanks to modern communications systems, relocation diffusion is no

longer essential for transmittal of ideas from one place to another. Culture and economy can diffuse rapidly around the world through forms of expansion diffusion.

If people can participate in the *globalization* of culture and economy regardless of place of residence, why do they still migrate in large numbers? The answer is that *place* is still important to an individual's cultural identity and economic prospects. Within a global economy, an individual's ability to earn a living varies by location. Within a global culture, people migrate to escape from domination by other cultural groups or to be reunited with others of similar culture. Migration of people with similar cultural values creates pockets of *local diversity*.

Although migration is a form of relocation diffusion, reasons for migrating can be gained from expansion diffusion. Someone may migrate and send back a message that gives others the idea of migrating. For example, many Europeans migrated to the United States in the nineteenth century, because very favorable reports from early migrants led them to believe that the streets of American cities were paved with gold.

KEY ISSUE 1

Why Do People Migrate?

- Reasons for migrating
- Distance of migration
- Characteristics of migrants

Geography has no comprehensive theory of migration, although a nineteenth-century outline of 11 migration "laws" written by E. G. Ravenstein is the basis for contemporary geographic migration studies. To understand where and why migration occurs, Ravenstein's "laws" can be organized into three groups: the reasons why migrants move, the distance they typically move, and their characteristics. Each of these elements is addressed in this section of the chapter.

Reasons for Migrating

- Most people migrate for economic reasons.
- Cultural and environmental factors also induce migration, although not as frequently as economic factors.

People decide to migrate because of push factors and pull factors. A *push factor* induces people to move out of their present location, whereas a *pull factor* induces people to move into a new location. As migration for most people is a major step not taken lightly, both push and pull factors typically play a role. To migrate, people view their current place of residence so negatively that they feel pushed away, and they view another place so attractively that they feel pulled toward it.

We can identify three major kinds of push and pull factors: economic, cultural, and environmental. Usually, one of the three factors emerges as most important, although as will be discussed later in this chapter, ranking the relative importance of the three factors can be difficult and even controversial.

Economic Push and Pull Factors

Most people migrate for economic reasons, as Lesya Kolosov did when she moved from Ukraine to Italy as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. People think about emigrating from places that have few job opportunities, and they immigrate to places where the jobs seem to be available. Because of economic restructuring, job prospects often vary from one country to another and within regions of the same country.

An area that has valuable natural resources, such as petroleum or uranium, may attract miners and engineers. A new industry may lure factory workers, technicians, and scientists. Construction workers, restaurant employees, and public-service officials may move to areas where rapid population growth stimulates demand for additional services and facilities.

The United States and Canada have been especially prominent destinations for economic migrants. Many European immigrants to North America in the nineteenth century truly expected to find streets paved with gold. While not literally gilded, the United States and Canada did offer European prospects for economic advancement. This same perception of economic plenty now lures people to the United States and Canada from Latin America and Asia.

The relative attractiveness of a region can shift with economic change. Similarly, Scotland and Ireland have attracted migrants in recent years after decades of net out-migration. Following the discovery of petroleum in the North Sea off the coast of northeast Scotland, thousands of people have been lured to jobs in the drilling or refining of petroleum or in supporting businesses.

Cultural Push and Pull Factors

Cultural factors can be especially compelling push factors, forcing people to emigrate from a country. Forced international migration has historically occurred for two main cultural reasons: slavery and political instability. Millions of people were shipped to other countries as slaves or as prisoners, especially from Africa to the Western Hemisphere, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Large groups of people were no longer forced to migrate as slaves in the twentieth century, but forced international migration increased because of political instability resulting from cultural diversity. Boundaries of newly independent states often have been drawn to segregate two ethnic groups. Because at least some intermingling among ethnicities inevitably occurs, members of an ethnic group caught on the "wrong" side of a boundary may be forced to migrate to the other side. We have also forced large-scale migration of ethnic groups in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, especially in Europe.

Africa. Forced migration of ethnicities is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

According to the United Nations, refugees are people who have been forced to migrate from their homes and cannot return, for fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion. Refugees have no home until another country agrees to allow them in, or improving conditions make possible a return to their former home. In the interim, they must camp out in tents, board in shelters, or lie down by the side of a road.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees, a nonprofit organization independent of the U.S. government (www.refugees.org), counted 33 million refugees in need of protection or assistance in 2005. This figure included 12 million people forced to migrate to another country and 21 million people forced to migrate to another region within the same country (Figure 3-1).

The two largest groups of international refugees, according to the U.S. Committee for Refugees, are Palestinians and Afghans. Palestinians are people who left Israel after the country was created in 1948, or those who left territories captured by Israel in 1967 (see Chapter 6). The large number of refugees from Afghanistan resulted from a quarter-century of civil war that began with the former Soviet Union's invasion of the country in 1979 (see Chapter 8).

The two largest groups of internal refugees are in Sudan and Colombia. In Sudan, an estimated 5.3 million internal refugees plus 700,000 international refugees have been generated by a quarter-century-long civil war between rebel armies in the south and northern-based government forces. Religious and cultural disputes are intertwined in the southerners' fight for autonomy (see Chapter 7).

In Colombia, government battles with drug lords and with guerrillas promoting land and social reform have resulted in 3 million refugees. Colombia has supplied 90 percent of the

cocaine reaching the United States. More than 1 million internal refugees each are occurring in Congo, Iraq, and Uganda.

Political conditions can also operate as pull factors, especially the lure of freedom. People are attracted to democratic countries that encourage individual choice in education, career, and place of residence. This pull factor is particularly difficult to disentangle from a push factor, because the pull of democracy is normally accompanied by the push from a totalitarian country.

After Communists gained control of Eastern Europe in the late 1940s, many people in that region were pulled toward the democracies in Western Europe and North America. After permitting some emigration to the West, the Communist governments in Eastern Europe clamped down for fear of losing their most able workers. The most dramatic symbol of restricted emigration was the Berlin Wall, which the Communists built to prevent emigration from Communist-controlled East Berlin into democratic West Berlin.

With the election of democratic governments in Eastern Europe during the 1990s, Western Europe's political pull disappeared as a migration factor. Eastern Europeans now can visit where they wish, although few have the money to pay for travel-related expenses beyond a round-trip bus ticket. However, Western Europe pulls an increasing number of migrants from Eastern Europe for economic reasons, as discussed later in this chapter.

Environmental Push and Pull Factors

People also migrate for environmental reasons, pulled toward physically attractive regions and pushed from hazardous ones. In an age of improved communications and transportation systems, people can live in environmentally attractive areas that are relatively remote and still not feel too isolated from employment, shopping, and entertainment opportunities.

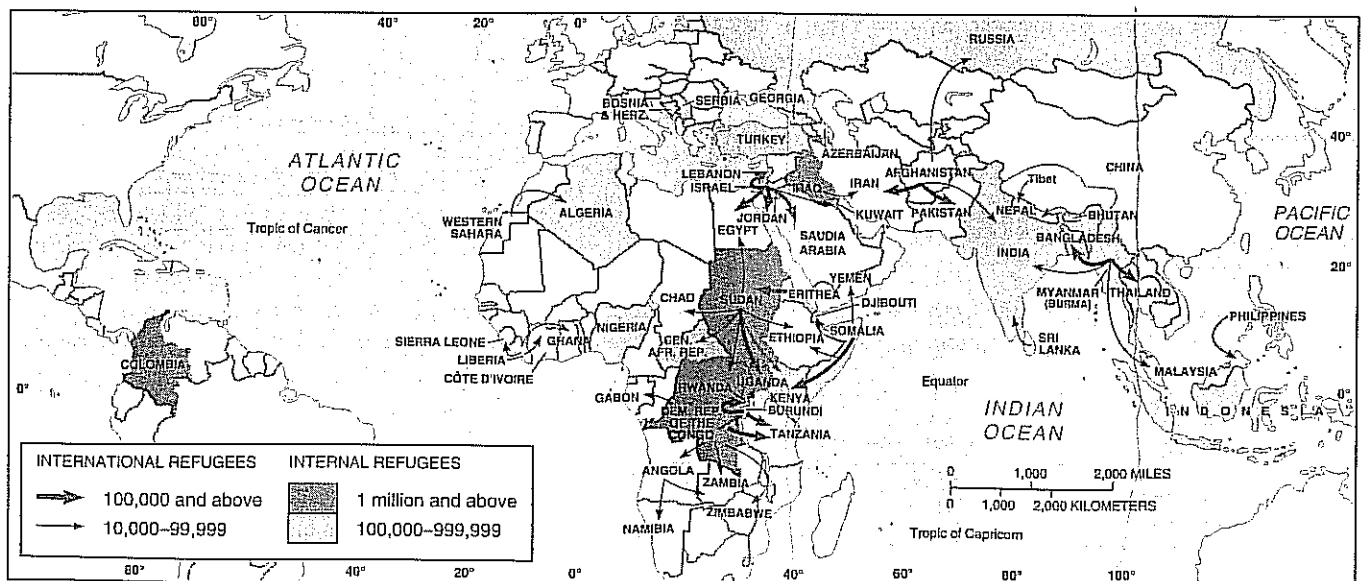


FIGURE 3-1 Major sources and destinations of refugees. A refugee is a person who is forced to migrate from a country, usually because of political reasons. The U.S. Committee for Refugees estimated that in 2005 there were 12 million refugees forced to migrate to other countries and 21 million forced to migrate to another region of the same country.